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USDA U.S. Department of Agriculture

Pesticide Data Program--Progress Report

February 2003

The Pesticide Data Program. Since 1991 USDA's Pesticide Data Program (PDP) has tested a wide range of commodities in the United States food supply for pesticide residues. Using the most current laboratory methods, PDP has tested both fresh and processed fruit and vegetables, grains, milk, beef, and poultry for pesticide residues. In 2001, PDP introduced testing of finished drinking water. PDP supports the food safety responsibilities of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

PDP Management. The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) coordinates PDP, manages sample collection and testing, and publishes annual reports. Other USDA agencies support PDP: the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) conducts nationwide surveys of food consumption; the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) conducts surveys on agricultural chemical usage and pest management practices used in production of fruit, nuts, vegetables, field crops, and livestock; and the Economic Research Service (ERS) assesses the economic implications of changes to pest management practices or pesticide regulations.

PDP Focus on Children's Foods. In response to the 1996 Food Quality Protection Act and a 1993 report by the National Academy of Sciences, PDP focuses primarily on children and provides critical realistic data for EPA assessments of dietary exposure to pesticide residues.

PDP Sampling. Samples for PDP testing are collected from the national food distribution system. Statistically reliable sampling schemes are designed for each PDP commodity so that PDP data represent pesticide residue exposure in the U.S. diet. Fruit and vegetables are collected at over 600 sites. Sampling of grains, meat, poultry, and some processed fruit and vegetables

requires fewer sites to produce reliable statistics. A commodity included in PDP usually is tested 2 full years. Commodities are often reintroduced into the program so that PDP data reflect current pest management practices.

PDP Testing – A Federal/State Partnership. State departments of agriculture work with USDA to collect and test samples. California, Colorado, Florida, Maryland, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin are part of the PDP effort. Two USDA laboratories also contribute to PDP testing—the AMS National Science Laboratory in Gastonia, North Carolina, and the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration Laboratory in Kansas City, Missouri. PDP Laboratory methods are continually improving so that residues can be detected at very low concentrations.

PDP Data. USDA recently prepared a summary of the 2001 PDP data. This summary, along with data from previous years, is available on the World Wide Web or by contacting the AMS Monitoring Programs Office (MPO). See the contact information at the end of this Progress Report.

PDP in 2001. The 2001 program included testing of 15 fresh fruit and vegetables (apples, bananas, broccoli, carrots, celery, cherries, grapes, green beans, lettuce, mushrooms, nectarines, oranges, peaches, pineapples, and potatoes), 3 processed commodities (canned sweet peas, canned sweet corn, and tomato paste), milled rice, poultry, and beef. Also in 2001, PDP began testing finished drinking water from community water systems in California and New York.

In 2001, PDP tested 12,264 samples—9,903 samples of fruit and vegetables, 689 rice samples, 911 beef samples, 464 poultry samples, and 297 samples of finished drinking water.

"PDP data continue to demonstrate that the Nation's food supply is among the safest in the world."
--A.J. Yates, Administrator, USDA Agricultural Marketing Service

Approximately 82 percent of food samples were domestic and 17 percent imported (less than 1 percent was of unknown origin). Approximately 64 percent of the fruit and vegetable samples, 49 percent of drinking water samples, and 19 percent of the beef tissue samples had detectable residues. Residues detected in beef samples resulted almost entirely from low-level detections of persistent chemicals that have been cancelled for agricultural use. Only 0.1 percent of all samples had residues that exceeded an established tolerance level.

In finished drinking water, PDP detected low levels (measured in parts per trillion) of some pesticides, primarily widely used herbicides. None of the detections exceeded established EPA Maximum Contaminant Levels or Health Advisory levels.

PDP in 2002. The 2002 program continued the testing of beef, rice, and 10 fresh fruit and vegetable commodities that were part of the 2001 program—apples, bananas, broccoli, carrots, celery, cucumbers, mushrooms, peaches, pineapples, and potatoes.

Four additional fresh commodities—asparagus, onions, spinach, and sweet bell peppers—were added to the program. PDP tested both canned and frozen sweet peas and sweet corn in 2002 plus three additional processed commodities—apple juice, apple sauce, and pear juice concentrate and puree.

Barley was introduced into the program and finished drinking water testing expanded to include community water systems in Colorado, Kansas, and Texas in addition to the sampling sites in California and New York.

The 2002 data and a summary report will be available early next year.

PDP in 2003. This year, PDP initiated testing of fresh sweet potatoes and fresh tomatoes and will continue to test fresh commodities that were part of the 2002 program—asparagus, cucumbers, mushrooms, onions, peppers, and spinach.

PDP also introduced three new processed commodities—butter, canned green beans, and canned peaches—and will continue to test pear juice, canned and frozen sweet peas, and canned and frozen sweet corn. Barley testing and the drinking water testing program will also continue this year.

Beyond the standard testing program, PDP will initiate a special testing scheme in early 2003 to analyze apples, peaches (canned and fresh), and wheat flour for residues of triazole fungicides and their metabolites.

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Data and Reports. PDP data and reports are available from MPO and on the USDA website at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/science/pdp>.

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